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USSR: Gromyko's New Post

Foreign Minister Gromyko's promotion to first deputy premier yesterday increases his status and is likely to give him broad authority over the entire foreign policy establishment, including the Ministry of Foreign Trade and the KGB. [redacted]

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Comment: Gromyko may relinquish his position as Foreign Minister, although there is precedent for holding both posts. If he does, the leading contenders for his job seem to be Ambassador Dobrynin and First Deputy Foreign Minister Korniyenko. [redacted]
[redacted] Dobrynin is in line for the post, but he has been less close to Gromyko than Korniyenko, a longtime protege. [redacted]

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The promotion of Gromyko, a reported ally of General Secretary Andropov in his succession bid, appears to strengthen Andropov's position in the Council of Ministers' Presidium, which oversees the government bureaucracy. Gromyko's seniority on the Politburo makes him the most senior of the three first deputy premiers. It also diminishes the authority of Premier Tikhonov, who has not been closely allied with Andropov and who was on an official visit to Yugoslavia when the announcement was made. [redacted]

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This is the highest level personnel change since last November. It suggests Andropov may now be in a position to make further changes, possibly as soon as next week. [redacted] a Central Committee plenum is imminent, and there are indications that Committee members are gathering in Moscow. [redacted]

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NIGERIA: Political Controversy

The announcement yesterday of a new schedule for different national and state elections this summer will be controversial and may provoke violence by the opposition. []

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The federal election commission has reversed the precedent established with the elections in 1979 by announcing that the presidential election this year will be held first—rather than last—on 6 August. Gubernatorial, federal legislative, and state assembly elections are to follow on subsequent weekends. []

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Opposition parties do not want any change in the previously established election order. []

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The security service is growing more concerned about possible coup plots. []

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Comment: The government faces a difficult task organizing and carrying out the elections schedule. The mismanaged voter registration drive has added to political tensions, undermined public faith in the system, and increased the probability of politically inspired violence. Officials in the ruling National Party, however, clearly hope Shagari will be able to carry weaker candidates to victory. []

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The aging Awolowo sees this election as his last chance for the presidency. He and other frustrated opposition leaders are certain to introduce a spate of lawsuits and may try to stir a public outcry by charging political favoritism and tampering with the constitutional process. If the schedule stands, and if a bandwagon effect develops, the Unity Party would be likely to believe it had no choice but to disrupt the subsequent elections. []

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UK: Byelection Result

The Labor candidate was declared the victor in the important byelection yesterday at Darlington, retaining the seat for his party. The outcome strengthens the position of Labor leader Foot.

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Comment: The recent momentum of the Social Democratic-Liberal Alliance has been slowed by its third-place showing yesterday. Prime Minister Thatcher can take some satisfaction that the Conservative candidate ran ahead of the Social Democratic-Liberal nominee. With Foot now less likely to resign as Labor's leader, Thatcher will have a better chance to use Labor's leadership situation as an issue in the general election and to claim that votes for the Social Democratic-Liberal Alliance might bring about a Labor victory.

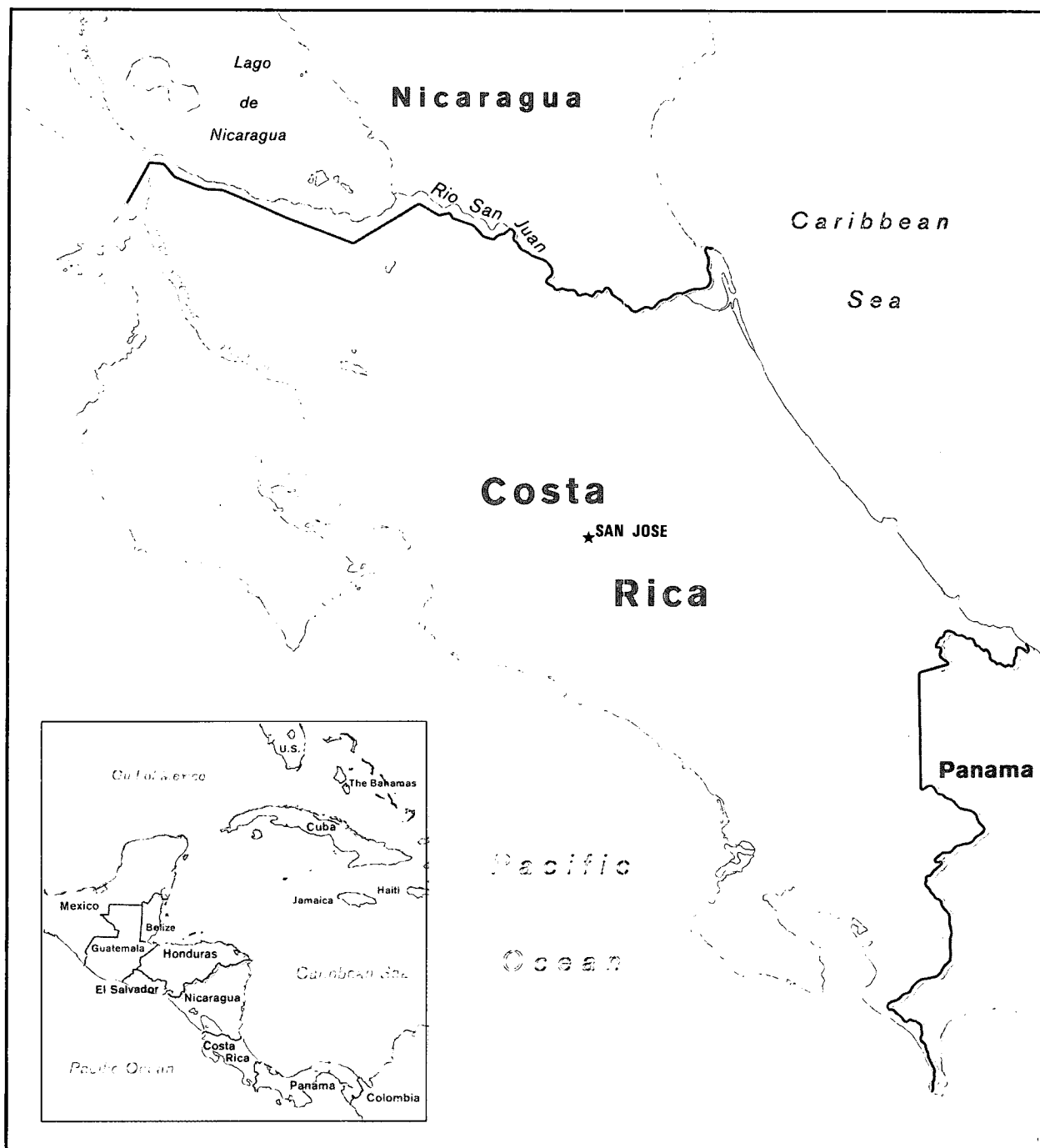
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COSTA RICA-NICARAGUA: Border Meeting Scheduled

Costa Rican Foreign Minister Volio says he and the Ministers of Public Security and Government will meet their Nicaraguan counterparts on 4 April. Defense Minister Ortega has been tentatively designated to lead the Nicaraguan delegation. The Costa Ricans plan to discuss border demarcation as well as Nicaraguan incursions and interference with free passage on the San Juan River. 

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Comment: Costa Rican President Monge apparently agreed to the meeting as a result of domestic and international demands that he soften his tough policy toward Managua. His delegation may discuss the recent increase in the flow of refugees from Nicaragua, while the Nicaraguans probably will focus on anti-Sandinista leader Pastora's activities in Costa Rica. The two sides may resume efforts to demarcate the border, but progress on major issues is unlikely.



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YUGOSLAVIA-USSR: Acquisition of Soviet Tanks

Yugoslavia is acquiring between 100 and 200 T-72 tanks from the USSR to replace its aging T-54 and T-55 tanks. [] the US defense attache says the T-72s are being provided under a barter agreement, which is intended to offset Soviet trade deficits of the past two years. The Yugoslav military previously had sought to acquire the T-72 through coproduction or coassembly arrangements. []

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Comment: The new tanks may be allotted to the 4th Tito Guards tank regiment in Belgrade, where at least one battalion is phasing out T-54s and T-55s. []

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USSR-ROMANIA: Problems in Energy Relations

A Soviet diplomat in Bucharest recently questioned Canadian officials about Romania's long-term plans for nuclear power cooperation with Canada and complained of the difficulties in negotiations to build Soviet reactors in Romania. The diplomat stated the USSR is cool to Bucharest's request to coproduce the Soviet reactors for export and that the Romanians have big ideas but no money to back them up. A Romanian official recently told the Canadians that Bucharest was withholding approval of the Soviet design because of safety flaws—the same reason the Romanians gave for abandoning the project in early 1970s. The Soviet diplomat also said the USSR is annoyed by Romania's request for increased oil deliveries at concessionary prices, especially in view of Bucharest's lack of cooperation on CEMA energy projects. []

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Comment: Despite economic problems at home and deteriorating relations with the West, Bucharest apparently does not intend to be more accommodating to Moscow. The unusual query to the Canadians about Romanian nuclear plans underscores the Soviets' estrangement from their Warsaw Pact ally. []

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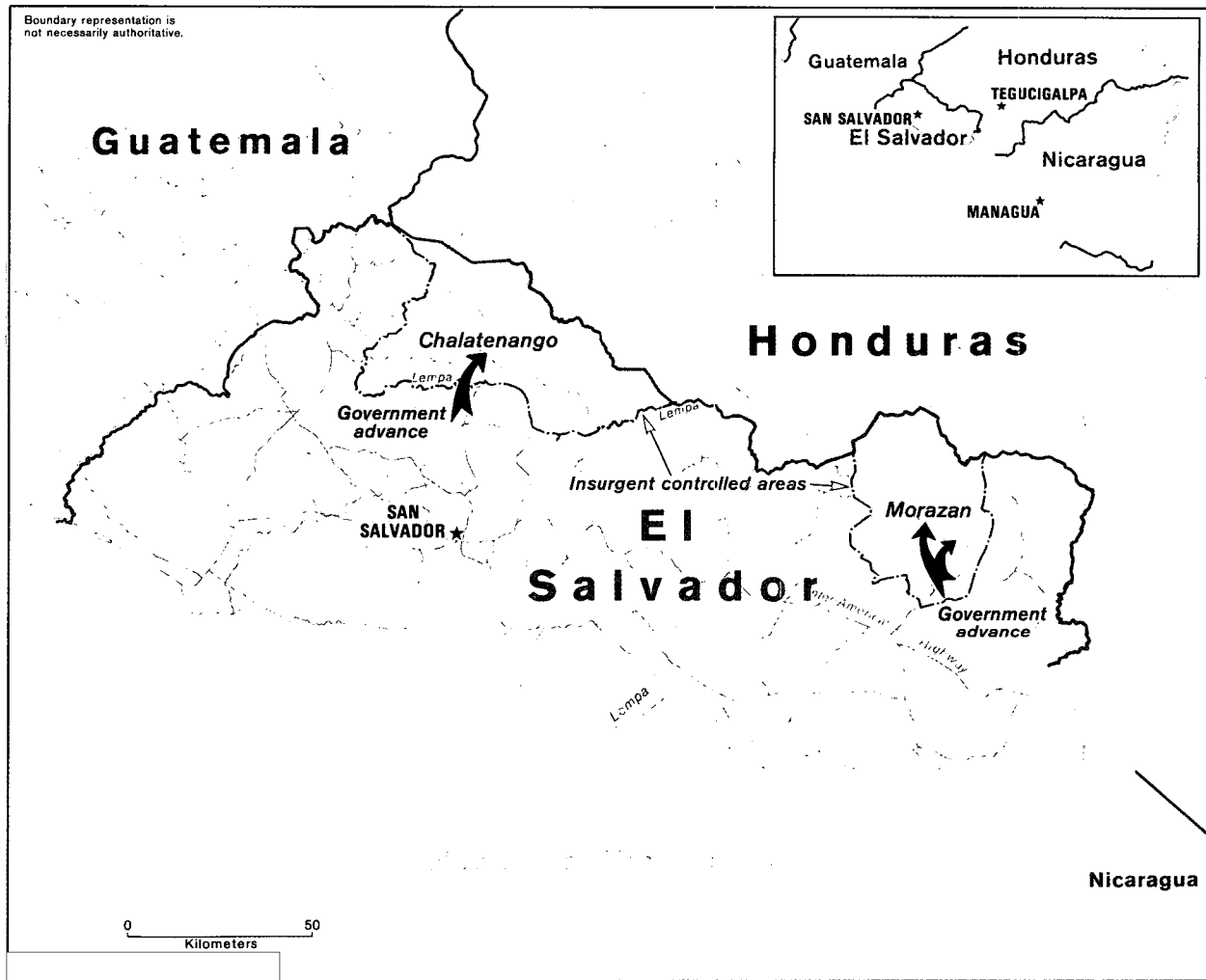
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Special Analysis

EL SALVADOR: Increased Tension in the Military

Another showdown may be approaching in the Salvadoran officer corps over Defense Minister Garcia's status. Garcia would prefer to remain in office through the presidential elections in December, even though subordinate commanders are seeking to oust him. Tension may ease over the short term if Garcia is forced out, but continued stability in the military will depend heavily on the personality of his successor. [redacted]

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Garcia reportedly has reaffirmed his intention to submit his resignation to President Magana in the next several weeks. Magana has not indicated if he will accept it, but he is likely to come under strong pressure from Garcia's critics to do so. [redacted]

[redacted]

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Probable Successors

If Magana accepts the resignation—which is not at all certain—Garcia's replacement probably would be General Vides Casanova. He is currently serving as head of the National Guard and is generally respected in the officer corps for his professionalism. [redacted]

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Vides would be likely to assume a caretaker role and follow a conciliatory line designed to strengthen the unity of the armed forces. He has a pro-US outlook, and he probably would continue to support agrarian reform, democratization, and human rights but largely as a means of ensuring continued US aid to the country. [redacted]

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Vides might be vulnerable, however, to pressures from civilian and military ideological hardliners and from ambitious young officers seeking new career opportunities and a more aggressive counterinsurgency strategy. Moreover, his lack of combat experience and personal following among the troops would be likely to hinder any efforts to increase control over traditionally independent regional commanders. [redacted]

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Air Force commander Colonel Bustillo, First Brigade leader Colonel Blandon, and Deputy Defense Minister Colonel Flores Lima are other possible candidates for Garcia's post. They all appear able to handle the job. [redacted]

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The three officers are pragmatic conservatives who would focus on unifying the military and cooperating with the US. To varying degrees, however, they would face problems similar to those confronting Garcia.

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Renewed Coup Plotting

If Garcia refuses to quit voluntarily, some reports suggest coup plotting would resume among some key field commanders. Although the officer corps would seek to avoid a coup at this time, senior officers critical of Garcia would be likely to urge Magana to remove him. Some individual commanders might even refuse to obey orders from Garcia until he agreed to step down.

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Such unrest in the military would have a debilitating impact on the power structure. As the principal force for moderation in the provisional government, the military leadership has been crucial to ensuring continued compromise among rival civilian parties and enforcing the reform process.

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Insurgent Reaction

The insurgents probably will try to turn any political problems in San Salvador to their own advantage. In January, following the rebellion of dissident field commander Lieutenant Colonel Ochoa, the guerrillas moved up their operational timetable and launched offensives in several regions.

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The insurgents are now regrouping and resupplying. To keep government forces off balance during this process, they are engaging in harassing actions. The Army, anticipating a renewed large-scale insurgent offensive, has sent quick-reaction forces to the northern departments of Chalatenango and Morazan to reinforce permanent garrisons and to launch preemptive operations.

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